

## **Re: Civil Society Engagement in the Global Compact**

The United Nations Global Compact is a voluntary, multi-stakeholder framework for businesses that are committed to aligning their operations and strategies with ten universally accepted principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment, and anti-corruption. The vigilance of civil society is a critical ingredient in the values-based change approach that underpins the Global Compact. In his remarks at the 2007 Global Compact Leaders Summit, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon specifically called on civil society and labour leaders “to remain vigilant and engaged, and contribute to hold businesses accountable to their commitments”. At his recent statement to Regional Groups of Member States, the SG underscored the importance of inclusiveness towards civil society.

The Global Compact facilitates and encourages constructive engagement by committed civil society organizations that have an understanding of the ten principles and related expertise – particularly in terms of helping companies translate the principles into policies and practices. The Global Compact is not a funding platform or mechanism. It does not ask business participants or other stakeholders to fund another organization. Rather, the focus is on the implementation of the ten principles through engagement and collective action.

Currently almost 400 civil society organizations which represent local, regional and global interests are involved in the Compact at some level. Civil society participants offer their expertise through a wide variety of activities, ranging from advocating the ten principles, advising the Global Compact Office on strategy, and providing invaluable input on the development of tools and guidance materials, to engaging in partnerships with business to promote sustainable development.

Civil society can participate through a wide variety of Global Compact engagement mechanisms that range from events, working groups, Local Networks, and partnership projects. Currently, four members of the Global Compact Board are representatives of civil society, while approximately 60 percent of Global Compact Local Networks include civil society organizations. **As a multi-stakeholder initiative, local networks are strongly encouraged to engage with civil society organizations as participants and stakeholders.** Otherwise, the Global Compact is not a compact.

To initiate their engagements, non-business participants are required to commit their organizations to the ten principles and are encouraged to report to their stakeholders on progress made within their organization. Prospective civil society organizations and NGOs must send a sign-on letter indicating their support of the ten principles and their willingness to engage. More specifically, the prospective participant agrees to assist business participants in implementing the principles, to explore opportunities to partner with business participants, and to disseminate information on the Global Compact principles. The prospective civil society organizations or NGO must also provide information about their organization by completing a standard form.

For more information, please visit [www.unglobalcompact.org](http://www.unglobalcompact.org) or contact Ms. Olajobi Makinwa at [makinwa@un.org](mailto:makinwa@un.org).